

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

February 1997

FEBRUARY HAPPENINGS

The February luncheon meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at 12 noon on Thursday, February 20 at the Kate Loblano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis.

Guest speaker will be Betsi Burgess of the Mississippi Gulf Coast Council of Garden Clubs who will discuss the forthcoming "Flowers by the Sea," celebrating the 50th anniversary of the annual spring pilgrimage of Coast gardens.

For reservations at \$6.00 call 467-4090 February 18th.

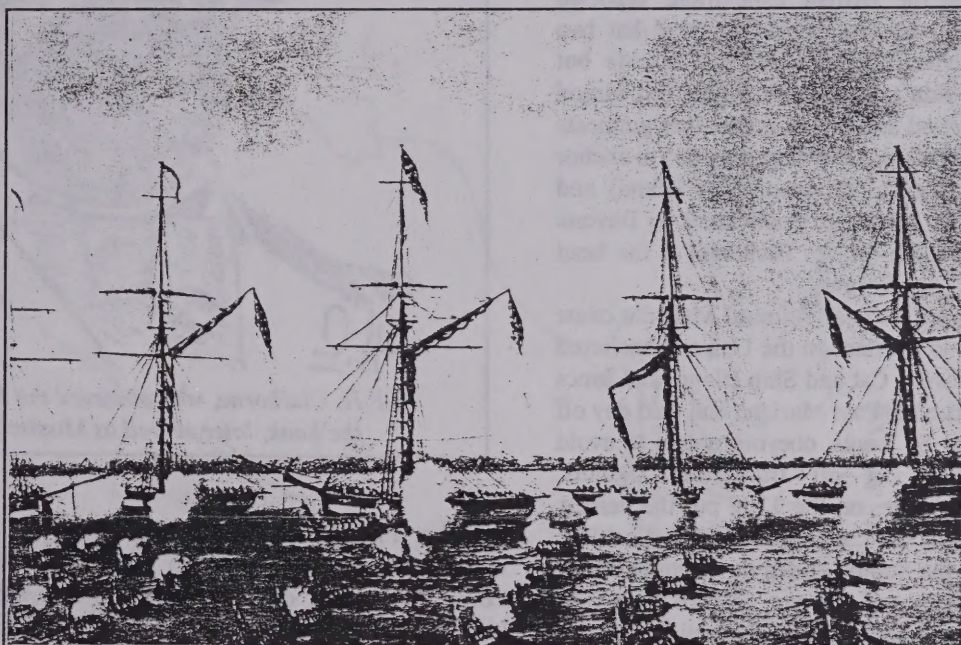
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The January tour of the Faberge collection in New Orleans was a great success. About 50 members brought lunch to the Loblano House and departed in a (brand new) Hotard bus. We were picked up at the door here, taken to the door there and returned to said first door in great comfort and style. The exhibit exceeded our expectations.

As mentioned above, beginning at the monthly meeting on February 20, the price of lunch will be \$6.00. We are very sorry to have to make this increase but it is necessary. However, local restaurants all quote us between \$10.50 and \$15.00 so perhaps it is not too bad.

Mondays especially are fun days at the Loblano house, they being the most popular days for volunteers who come to help us with sundry projects. Karen and I thank those of you who come and we invite the rest to join us (any day), 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Charles Gray



Above: In the Battle of Lake Borgne, depicted in this oil painting, Lieutenant Thomas Ap Catesby Jones fought the last naval engagement against a foreign enemy in American territorial waters.

From: *The Mississippi Gulf Coast: Portrait of a People*, by Charles L. Sullivan

THE BATTLE OF BAY SAINT LOUIS

"War having been declared by the United States against Great Britain, our volunteers had been principally engaged in severe conflicts with the Creek Indians, led by Gen. Claiborne of Natchez, and Gen. Ripley of this county," said J.F.H. Claiborne in his Fourth of July speech in 1876 in Bay St. Louis.

"Two regiments of United States troops, under Gen. Ripley, that had long been stationed here (near the present mansion of our public-spirited fellow citizen, Alfred Ulman, Esq.) and had recruited into its ranks a number of our residents, had left for Canada."

Contemporary accounts cite the assumption of the U.S. leadership that the War of 1812 would be fought on our northern boundary.

A December 5, 1814 letter signed only "N" was sent from Pensacola to Commodore Daniel T. Patterson, commanding the U.S. Naval station at New Orleans. The writer warned of a British fleet of 80 warships and a large body of troops that arrived at Pensacola from the West Indies on the 4th and had as its object an attack on New Orleans.

Responding to this threat to the city, Patterson sent five gunboats,

(Continued on page 2)

(Battle from page 1)

a tender and dispatch boat toward the passes Mariana and Christiana under the command of Thomas Catesby Jones with orders to make a stand at the Rigolets and sink the enemy or be sunk.

Lieutenant Jones sent two gunboats to go as far as Dauphin Island where they found the British advance scouts Armide and Sophie.

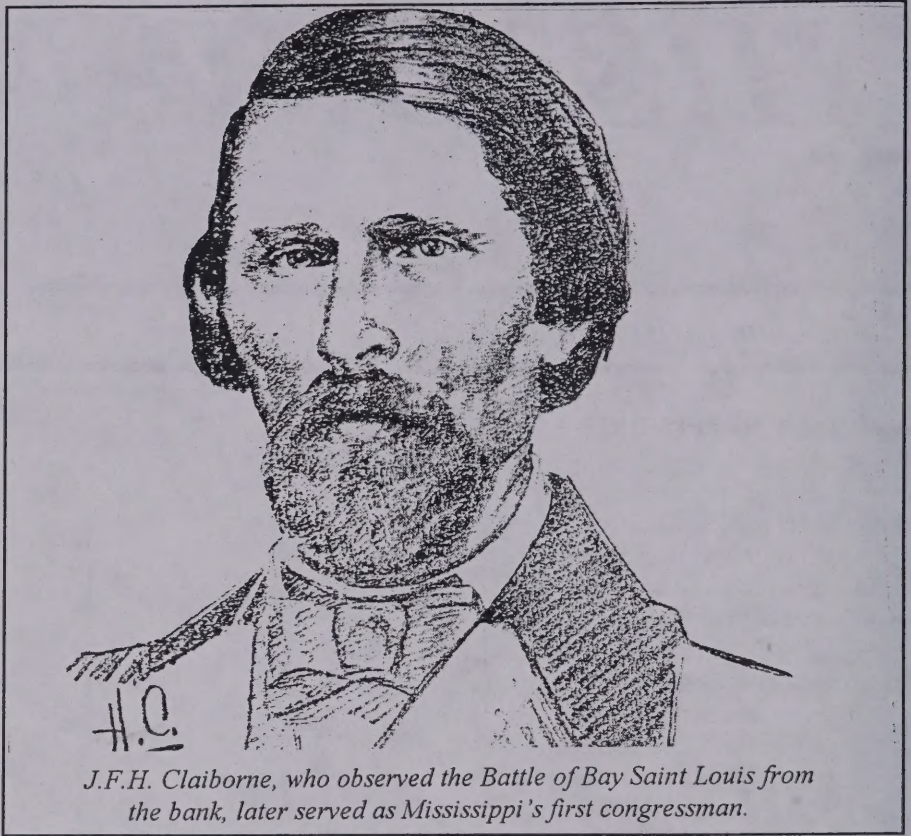
Vice Admiral Cochrane, commanding the British expedition, reported from the Armide off Cat Island that two gunboats fired upon the Armide but couldn't sustain the action and turned around and joined three other gunboats off Biloxi. Cochrane intended to anchor at Isle au Vaisseau (Ship Island) and send troops in small boats to Bayone Castalan (or des Pecheurs) at the head of Lake Borgne.

British Rear Admiral Malcolm came up to the fleet on the 11th and anchored between Cat and Ship Island, and Jones retired to Pass Mariana and next day off Bay St. Louis, obeying orders to avoid being cut off from the Rigolets. Cochrane, on the 12th, put the vessels under the command of Capt. Locklear of the Sophie, aided by Captains Montessor and Roberts, against Jones who then determined to take station near the Malheureux (unfortunate) islands. About 2 p.m. on the 13th, the British boats were at Pass Christian. The water was so low because of westerly wind, that three of the gunboats could not get afloat, even by throwing overboard all that could be spared, until floodtide at 3:30.

Three of the British boats entered Bay St. Louis to cut off the schooner Seahorse that Jones had sent in to remove the stores deposited there. A few shots drove the barges out of range, but they were reinforced by four others, and the attack renewed.

Sailing-master Johnson of the Seahorse was supported in the fight by a shore battery of two 6-pounders, and after a sharp action of 30 minutes, the enemy drew off, with one boat damaged and several men killed or wounded. But it was necessary at 7:30 to blow up the schooner and burn the storehouse.

Claiborne, in his patriotic speech,



J.F.H. Claiborne, who observed the Battle of Bay Saint Louis from the bank, later served as Mississippi's first congressman.

said that a regiment of militia from the interior had been stationed in Bay St. Louis for several days to oppose the landing of the enemy.

"They had two pieces of cannon in position. When the British flotilla approached to cut off the Seahorse, the militia became nervous and began to break ranks," Claiborne said.

"Most of our citizens were on the bluff, and an invalid lady from Natchez exclaimed, 'My God, Colonel, fire one for the honor of the country?'"

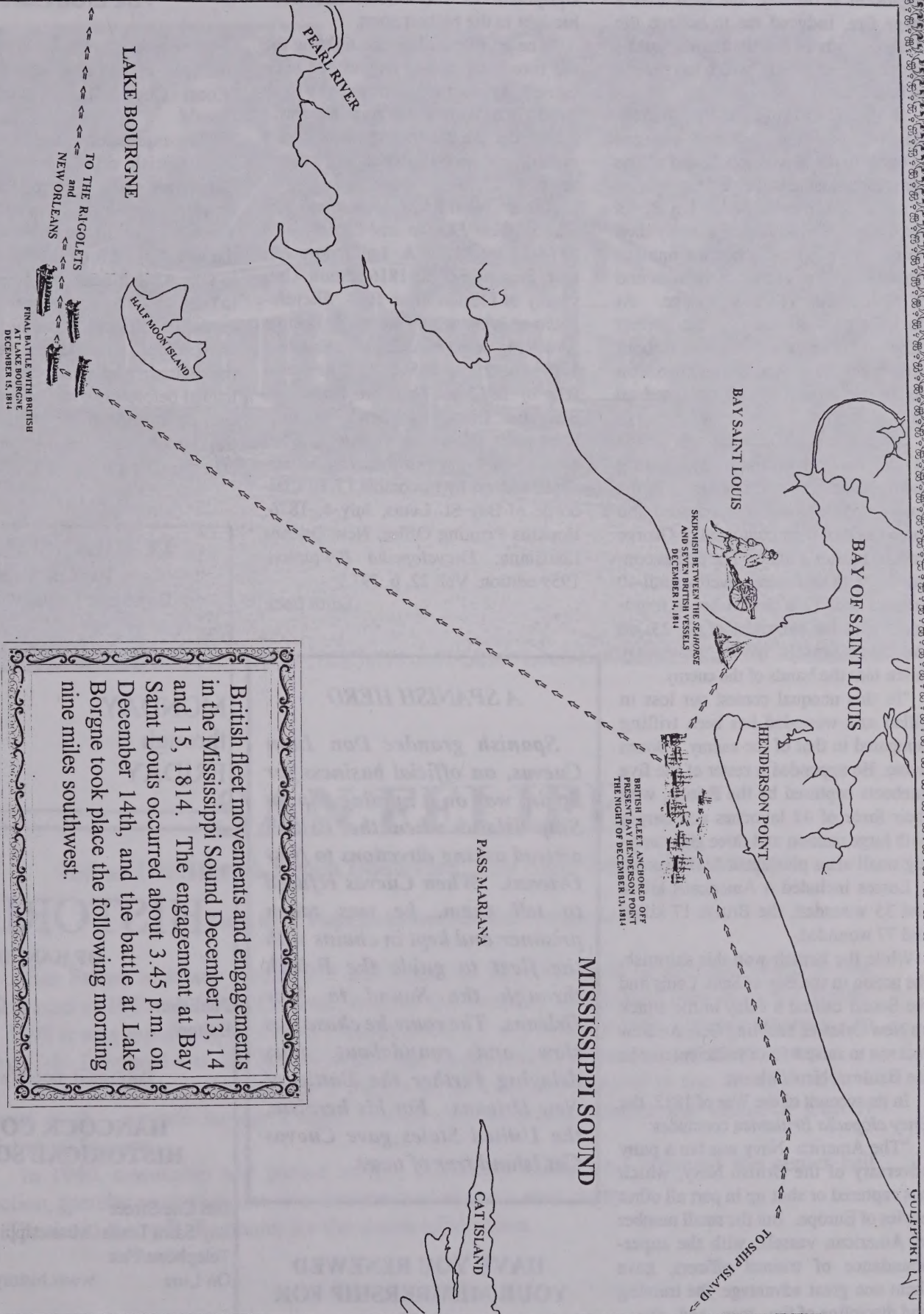
"The gallant colonel probably did not hear these words, for he was rapidly retiring, followed by the bulk of his men and their first halt was at the Big-spring beyond Ho-bo-li-chitto.

"The lady called for a light. The late John B. Toulme, then a youth, courteously handed his cigarette, and she discharged the cannon amidst the plaudits of our people.

"A number of our young men, led by Mr. Toulme, who know the route through the marshes and bayous, went in pirogues with their rifles and took part in the defense of New Orleans."

Jones, in his final report to his superiors in 1815, "after having sufficiently recovered my strength," described the events of December 1814.

"At 3:45, the enemy dispatched three boats to cut out the schooner Seahorse, which had been sent into the Bay St. Louis that morning to assist in the removal of the public stores, which I had previously ordered. There finding a removal impractical, I ordered preparations to be made for their destruction lest they fall into the enemy's hands. A few discharges of grape-shot from the Seahorse compelled the three boats, which had attacked her, to retire out of reach of her gun, until they were joined by four others when the attack was recommenced by the seven boats. Mr. Johnson having chosen an advantageous position near the two six-pounders mounted on the bank, maintained a sharp action for near 30 minutes. The enemy hauled off, having one boat apparently much injured, and with the loss of several men killed and wounded. At 7:30, an



explosion at the bay, and soon after a large fire, induced me to believe the Seahorse was blown up and the public storehouse set on fire, which has proven to be the fact."

While Jones drove the British from Bay St. Louis, the adversaries engaged in battle in the Mississippi Sound off the Malheureux islands the next day.

Jones continued, "About 1 a.m. on the 14th, the wind having entirely died away, and our vessels became unmanageable, came to anchor in the west end of Malheureux island's passage. At daylight next morning, still a perfect calm, the enemy's flotilla was about nine miles from us at anchor, but soon got in motion and rapidly advanced on us."

Jones' account continued with details of the two adversaries maneuvering their vessels for confrontation. In the ensuing battle, Jones was wounded and forced to turn over command to George Parker, master's mate. The action continued "with unabating severity until 40 minutes past 12 o'clock when it terminated with the surrender of no. 23, all the other vessels having previously fallen into the hands of the enemy.

"In this unequal contest our loss in killed and wounded has been trifling compared to that of the enemy," Jones wrote. He appended a roster of the five gunboats captured by the British, with their force of 42 launches and barges with large cannon and three gigs carrying small arms plus about 1,000 troops.

Losses included 6 Americans killed and 35 wounded; the British 17 killed and 77 wounded.

While the British won this skirmish, the action in the Bay of Saint Louis and the Sound caused a delay in the attack on New Orleans, enabling Gen. Andrew Jackson to raise a force sufficient to win the Battle of New Orleans.

In its account of the War of 1812, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* concludes:

"The America Navy was but a puny adversary of the British Navy, which has captured or shut up in port all other navies of Europe. But the small number of American vessels, with the superabundance of trained officers, gave them one great advantage: the training and discipline of the men, and the

equipment of the vessels had been brought to the highest point.

"The art of handling and fighting the old broadside sailing frigate had been carried in the little American Navy to an excellence with unvarying success... Altogether the American vessels gave a remarkably good account of themselves."

(Sources: *Historical Memoir of The War in West Florida and Louisiana in 1814-15* by Major A. LaCarriere Latour, facsimile of the 1816 edition, University of Florida Press 1964; *Encyclopedia of Mississippi History* by Dunbar Rowland, Selwyn A. Brant, publisher, 1907, vol. 2, pp 265 -267; *The Naval War of 1812* by Theodore Roosevelt, Standard Library edition, Putnam's Sons 1903; *Historical Account of Hancock County and Sea Board of Mississippi*, address by Honorable J.F.H. Claiborne of Bay St. Louis, July 4, 1876. Hopkins Printing Office, New Orleans Louisiana; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1959 edition, Vol. 22, p. 797.)

Edith Back

A SPANISH HERO

Spanish grandee Don Juan Cuevas, on official business for Spain, was on a hunting trip on Ship island when the British arrived asking directions to New Orleans. When Cuevas refused to tell them, he was taken prisoner and kept in chains with the fleet to guide the British through the Sound to New Orleans. The route he chose was slow and roundabout, thus delaying further the Battle of New Orleans. For his heroism, the United States gave Cuevas Cat Island free of taxes.

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THE LIGHTER SIDE

The expression "to eat crow" was born in the War of 1812, according to a recent "Coast Chronicles" column in the *Sun Herald*.

"The expression springs from the meeting of a British officer and a hungry New Englander who, during a cease fire, wandered over enemy lines and shot a crow. The officer heard the noise, was angry, took the gun, turned it on the soldier, forced him to take a bite of the raw crow and told him to be gone. The soldier then turned the gun on the Britain and forced him to eat the rest of the crow. The incident was protested by the British and when the American was hauled before his superior and asked if he'd ever seen the officer, replied, 'Why yes, Captain. I dined with him yesterday.'"

(*The Sun Herald*, Jan. 26, 1997)

LOBRANO HOUSE

108 Cue Street
Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

HOURS

MONDAY	8 a.m.
through	to
FRIDAY	4 p.m.

THE

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Charles H. Gray
Edith Back

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**HANCOCK COUNTY
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Telephone/Fax [601] 467-4090
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SAN FELIPE

986 and 988 South Beach Boulevard, Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

These large Victorian houses were once a single home

San Felipe was built circa 1855 and consisted of thirty acres of grounds when it was purchased in 1880 by Alfred LeBlanc, head of the Harrison Steamship Lines in New Orleans. In 1898 it was purchased by Henry Plauche Dart, Sr. a prominent New Orleans attorney. In 1918, Mr. Dart sold it to the Jewish Orphanage Federation to be used as a summer camp.

We are told that a photograph of the house, still intact, appeared in the *Times-Picayune* about 1920. Anyone having a copy of that edition, please contact the Hancock County Historical Society.

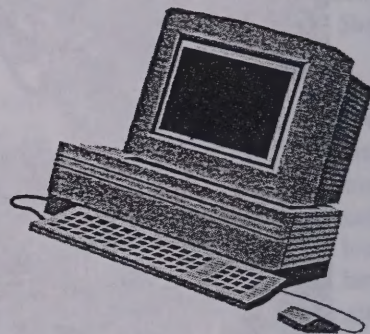
In 1940, ownership had passed to Mrs. Charlotte Aiken who removed the center hall section, thereby separating the two structures as they are seen today.

Thanks to Kerry P. Redmann for the above information..

BULLETIN BOARD

LUNCHEON COST REMINDER

Effective February meeting luncheon will cost \$6.00.



COMPUTER CLASSES

We have a few openings in the classes remaining in the current series. These classes cost \$15 for members and \$20 for non-members.

INTRO TO COMPUTERS AND WORD PROCESSING I

This class introduces WINDOWS and the basic fundamentals of word processing using MICROSOFT WORD.
TUESDAY, FEB. 18 AT 3PM - 5PM

WORD PROCESSING II

This class is a continuation of Word Processing I and is designed to teach more techniques of basic word-processing and file management in MICROSOFT WORD.
THURSDAY, FEB. 20 AT 3PM - 5PM
SATURDAY, FEB. 22 10:30 AM - 12PM

WORD PROCESSING III

This intermediate class is designed for those who have taken basics courses in MS WORD. Learn advanced techniques in desktop publishing beyond just word processing.
TUESDAY, FEB. 25 3PM - 5PM
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 26 6PM - 8PM

PLEASE CALL 467-4090 TO REGISTER. CLASS SIZE IS LIMITED. CLASSES ARE TAUGHT BY A QUALIFIED, PROFESSIONAL TEACHER.

ALSO IN DEVELOPMENT IS A CLASS TO LEARN HOW TO USE THE INTERNET. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN TAKING AN INTERNET CLASS, PLEASE CALL AND GIVE US YOUR NAME.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

MRS. BRENDA PLUMLEY

MR. RONALD BOURGEOIS

MS. JENISE MCCARDELL

MRS. ANTOINETTE PICHON

MR. FORREST HAYDEN, JR.

HCHS COOKBOOK

The Hancock County Historical Society is planning a cookbook featuring old family recipes. We would like to invite everyone to submit their favorite old (or new) family recipe for inclusion in the cookbook. This cookbook will also feature some of our historic homes.

We're hoping to publish this cookbook in time for Christmas gift giving. This cookbook should be a most sought-after book because we have so many good cooks who are members of the Society and hopefully they will share their secrets.

Please bring or mail your submissions to Kate Lobrano House, P. O. Box 312, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520.

50TH ANNIVERSARY MISS. GULF COAST PILGRIMAGE

HOMES IN THE BAY-WAVELAND AREA WILL BE OPEN ON THURS. MARCH 20 1997. BEACHWOOD HALL, THE HOME OF CHARLES GRAY AND JAMES PLAUCHE WILL BE OPEN FROM 9AM TO NOON.

WE ARE REQUESTING THAT ANYONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE A HOSTESS CALL THE LOBRANO HOUSE AT 467-4090.

THANKS TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE PAID YOUR 1997 DUES. DUES ARE THE BASIS OF OUR OPERATING BUDGET AND DUES KEEP YOUR NEWSLETTERS COMING!

HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUPPORTERS

WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT THAT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS HAVE GIVEN TO THE
HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



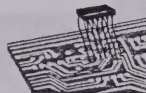
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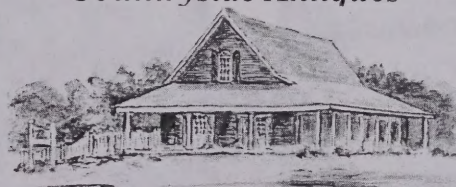
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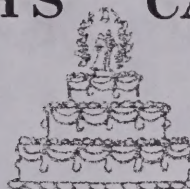
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